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## Extended essay cover

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: World Studies

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: What are the impacts of school-related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in China and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success?

### Candidate's declaration

*This declaration must be signed by the candidate; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

### Supervisor's report and declaration

*The supervisor must complete this report, sign the declaration and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator.*

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters)

*Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.*

embraced the Extended Essay process from beginning to end. She spent countless hours thinking about and researching the topic, followed each guided step in a way that allowed her to dig deeper into the subject and, in turn, wrote an essay that she believes in and takes great pride in discussing.

As a shy and very capable student, the topic was of genuine interest and significance to her. Of note though, was that as she went through the process, she developed a genuine interest in research and is now incredibly interested in pursuing it as a field of study. She was both happy and disappointed to finish the essay because she so enjoyed the process.

Of all the students I've worked with in the past number of years, stands out for embodying exactly what we hope to achieve through the EE: curious, risk taking researchers. It was a pleasure and a highlight to work with on this essay.

*This declaration must be signed by the supervisor; otherwise a grade may not be issued.*

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent  hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

## Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Criteria	Achievement level	
	Examiner 1	maximum
A research question	2	2
B introduction	2	2
C investigation	4	4
D knowledge and understanding	4	4
E reasoned argument	4	4
F analysis and evaluation	4	4
G use of subject language	4	4
H conclusion	2	2
I formal presentation	4	4
J abstract	2	2
K holistic judgment	4	4

Total out of 36

36

**What are the impacts of school-related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in China and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success?**

**A comparative study of Northern European and Chinese adolescent females**

Category: World Studies

Disciplines: Psychology and social and cultural anthropology

Word Count: 3988

**Abstract:**

This essay will examine the question: What are the impacts of school-related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in China and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success? School-related stress is of global significance, as it is becoming increasingly noticed in certain regions. Thus, it is a worthwhile topic to investigate.

This essay will investigate the research question using the subjects of psychology and social and cultural anthropology. Psychology is a subject that focuses on why humans behave the way they do. In this essay, it will explore the psychological effects of stress on self-perception. I will investigate different mental disorders that can develop as a result of school-related stress, and well as the emotional effects of stress and how they affect overall student mindsets.

The subject of social and cultural anthropology will examine how culture plays a role in school-related stress in high school students. The theories of cultural relativism and universalism will be used to compare the school-related stress reported in different regions of the world. Cultural relativism will explore stress in high school students in their local settings by considering daily life and relative cultural ideals. Universalism will focus more on the global culture of teenage girls affected by school-related stress in order to develop an understanding of why stress is a significant global issue.

This essay concludes by stating that female students who set high expectations and intense goals for themselves, regardless of where they live in the world, experience high amounts of school-related stress and the accompanying effects. Most significantly, the self-perceptions that adolescent females are developing are negative, and encompass both hatred and disappointment. The negative views contribute to their overall happiness as well as how they perceive success looking towards the future.

(296 words)

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**Introduction and Background:**

As an adolescent female, I have experienced school-related stress in the past few years from being in the academically challenging International Baccalaureate program. My desire to do well has made me susceptible to stress, although I had no familiarity with it prior to high school. I am not alone in this; school-related stress is continually present in my life, and is something I also notice persistently in my friends and classmates. This led me to question whether or not the notion of stress and its relation to high school could be examined in adolescent females on a global level.

I live in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Adolescent stress is not a topic that has been studied in depth in Nova Scotia, or in any of the other Maritime Provinces in Canada. However, there has been a great deal of research on the mental health of teenagers. Dr. Stanley Kutcher is an expert in adolescent mental health ("Dr. Stanley Kutcher, MD, FRCPC."). He is the Sun Life Financial Chair in Adolescent Mental Health and has made many significant impacts and breakthroughs in his research and directorial roles at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia ("A Day in the Life"). He has researched many aspects of adolescent mental health such as behaviour, sleep, Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression and suicide ("Dr. Stanley Kutcher, MD, FRCPC."). The amount of time and dedication he has put into his work demonstrates the importance of the topic of adolescent mental health.

Adolescence is a crucial time, during which teenagers undergo physical and psychological developments that can affect them for the rest of their lives. Therefore, adolescence is a very stressful time, given the numerous changes experienced (Siddique

and D'Arcy 460). Stress is defined by Hans Selye as "the nonspecific response of the body of a demand made to it" (Finch et al. 312). Stress is an important component of mental health, and yet has not been explored by Dr. Kutcher. Many research projects on mental health in Nova Scotia can be accredited to him in some way and it is interesting that there have not yet been any case studies on stress in high school students.

Although different things in different people can stimulate stress, school is a major part of most adolescents' lives, and thus it can be an obvious stressor. When students reach a point where the demands of their courses are too much to handle, they become stressed. The more demands that pile up, the more their inability to cope takes over and the more stressed they become (Finch et al. 314). Numerous studies have shown that this is most obviously seen in high school aged females who are in demanding programs or courses at school and are very committed to their schoolwork and marks (Olfors and Andersson 144).

The notion of success affects high school students more than they realize. Success comes from caring. It is an important consideration in regards to the future, as success affects the kind of life it is possible to live, which will determine future happiness. As a high school student, knowing how crucial school and my grades are in regards to my future is incredibly stressful. Being able to take the next step in creating the future that I want depends on how academically successful I am this year. This creates stress in my life that can be only described as suffocating when it reaches a certain point.

My aim was to write a world studies extended essay comparing how local adolescents and adolescents of a different culture were impacted by stress. However, the



lack of case studies on adolescent stress in Nova Scotia made this impossible. There have been numerous studies on academic stress in adolescents in different parts of the world. By examining this subject in different parts of the world, it is possible to develop an understanding of adolescent stress in female high school students with high self-expectations as a global subculture. Therefore, this essay aims to answer the question: What are the impacts of school-related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in China and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success? I will examine stress in high-achieving adolescent females brought on by high school courses. In particular, this essay will focus on a number of distressed high school females in Northern Europe and China to develop an understanding of adolescent stress and why it is a significant issue. This can then be used to link back to adolescent females in Nova Scotia. Two disciplines will be used: psychology and social and cultural anthropology.

The discipline of psychology will be used to examine the impact of stress on adolescent females. This will be done in connection with mental health issues and disorders developed from school-related stress and the feelings resulting in relation to success. School-related stress can change the way students see themselves. Given that adolescents are at an age of vulnerability, feelings of hatred, frustration and disappointment can alter their self-esteem, self-worth, and overall self-perception.

The discipline of social and cultural anthropology will examine the effects of culture and society on adolescent perception of stress and self. It will encompass the theories of cultural relativism and universalism to examine adolescent females in the

relative cultures of Northern Europe and China, and apply this to the universal culture that is adolescent females.

### **Psychology**

This discipline aims to examine the psychology in school-related stress experienced by adolescent females. Psychology uses theories to study how and why humans behave and think as they do (Woods et al. 5-6). This discipline looks at a few different theories that connect to school-related stress with the main focus on psychological consequences that can result from experiencing stress as an adolescent female.

It was found in numerous studies that female adolescents are significantly more susceptible to psychological distress than males (Siddique and D'Arcy 460; Wiklund et al. 2; Huan et al. 173; Lindahl et al. 492; Hui 190). This is assumed to be because of their structural gender roles and psychological nature (Siddique and D'Arcy 460). As females, they are under expectations about how to act and what role to take in a family setting. They may feel like in addition to fulfilling family traditions and patterns they must also excel at school to better their futures and make their families proud, contributing further to already existing pressure. They are also more psychologically dependent on their families, which adds an intimidation factor. They must seek approval from the people they depend on, making them more susceptible to self-esteem issues as a result of school-related stress (Siddique and D'Arcy 469).

Many adolescent females attribute their school-related stress to their own expectations (Finch et al. 315). They put themselves emotionally into their schooling, thus becoming vulnerable to feelings of rejection (Kaplan et al. 4). High self-expectations place a lot of pressure on adolescents, thus their stress levels escalate. This means there is a greater chance of being disappointed. Disappointment is dangerous, as some adolescent females base their self-worth entirely on their academics (Park et al. 1504). The way that adolescent females perceive themselves is extremely important, as high school is a crucial time of development and adjustment. Negative self-perceptions can impact the mental and emotional states of adolescent females (Siddique and D'Arcy 461). When a student fails, they may link the failure to themselves and believe they are a failure as a person (Park et al. 1503). The mind-sets resulting from academic distress and being unable to cope with demands and expectations will affect a student's self-esteem (Kaplan et al. 5). Being unable to meet academic goals is a devaluing experience and so feelings of hatred, anxiety and disappointment towards oneself will arise.

It is possible that adolescent females with high self-expectations believe themselves to be under the watch of an "imaginary audience." This is an audience that they imagine is focusing closely on everything they do and accomplish (Woods et al. 272). They play into this audience by trying to be the smartest and most successful. They feel as if they will be criticized and considered a failure if they do not live up to what this audience is expecting. This audience could be anyone- family, friends or anyone who inflicts stress. The imaginary audience could even be oneself in the future, judging every move made in the present. Effectively imagining judgement from a daunting audience

could be another portrayal of adolescent's overwhelmingly stressful expectations and resulting self-perceptions.

In one study: *The existence of school-related stress in two grammar schools in Northern Ireland: contributing factors and moderation*, there was found to be a clear link between school-related stress of female Irish students and negative self-perception. The students who reported this connection described their feelings as constantly "disappointed in self, worthless, incapable or stupid whilst others commented on loss of identity, feelings of apathy or a wish to give up" (Finch et al. 321). This link between school-related stress and self-perception is crucial; self-perception affects the way students perform in school, interact with others, and live in general. Comments of high school students involved in the study were "You're not really yourself anymore" and "...feeling I can't cope, like I'm a failure" (Finch et al. 321). If high achieving adolescent females perceive themselves as stupid and unable to accomplish anything, they will never be happy with themselves. They will always feel as if they could have done more or could have done better.

Perceiving oneself negatively from school-related stress connects to the theory of perfectionism. Perfectionism is the unwillingness to accept anything less than perfect and perfectionists must live up to every expectation that has been set for them (Parker 546). Academic perfectionists can be created by school-related stress (Finch et al. 319). Studies have shown that higher academically achieving students are more likely to become perfectionists, and that females are more likely to become perfectionists than males (Parker 547). The immense stress that certain high school females place on themselves in regards to their schoolwork can become obsessive. There is a difference between wanting

and needing to succeed. Neurotic perfectionists will never be satisfied with themselves and they will never feel like they are good enough (Parker 546). This is particularly concerning as they are at risk of mental health issues when the stress of never achieving enough becomes too much for them to handle (Parker 546). Unhealthy, neurotic perfectionism has been linked to psychiatric disorders such as depression, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, insomnia, panic disorder and suicide (Parker 546), all of which can severely affect the success and futures of adolescent females.

The development of mental health problems in chronically stressed female adolescents was observed in several studies (Wikland et al. 2; Finch et al. 321; Crystal et al. 739; Siddique and D'Arcy 460; Liu and Lu 344). "Adolescence is viewed as a critical period for early-onset mental illness" (Wikland et al. 2). The immense school-related stress that girls create places them at risk of long term consequences. The psychological effects of school-related stress can range anywhere from sadness to depression and suicidal thoughts in high school aged females who are frequently stressed out. Furthermore, some girls who have stress-induced depression go as far as to say that they wish to self-harm or commit suicide (Finch et al. 321). Feelings of exhaustion and difficulty relaxing are also common in adolescent females (Wikland et al. 9-10). The impact of social stress from peers and family joined with pressure from school in adolescent females increases the chances of developing depression, anxiety, social dysfunction and overall emotional distress (Siddique and D'Arcy 461).

These effects of school-related stress can have psychological implications for the futures of adolescents in relation to success. The strong desires of committed students to

succeed in school and reach their high expectations can actually affect their schoolwork for the worse. Stress impacts the way that students are able to think, as it restricts the ability to understand and gain knowledge of what is right in front of them (Lindahl et al. 490). If dedicated students are unable to perform well in times of high stress, they risk doing poorly or failing, and thus not meeting the standards that they have set so high for themselves. This will contribute to how they view success. Students will feel like all of the hard work and emotional investment in their studies was wasted.

The possibility of success that originally motivates students to set high self-expectations and work hard can inflict high levels of stress and lead to them struggling to succeed academically.

### **Social and Cultural Anthropology**

This essay focuses on adolescent females in the relative cultures of Northern Europe and China. However, teenage girls are present in every culture and the attributes of culture such as family, values and expectations are universal in that they are a part of everyone's lives. This discipline will use the theories of cultural relativism and universalism. These theories were chosen because although they highlight certain differences that can be attributed to the relative cultures of Northern Europe and China, they also show similarities in how stress impacts adolescent females that can be understood in considering the universal subculture that is adolescent females. An understanding of this subculture can then be applied back to my region of the world.

The theory of Cultural relativism is based on the idea that goals, values, beliefs and behaviours are unique to each culture (Koslowsky et al. 131), and that each individual must conform to the expectations of their particular culture (Nowell-Smith 2). Each aspect of a particular culture can only be examined in regards to that culture; it cannot be applied to other cultures (Nowell-Smith 2). Truth and judgement are relative to culture (Tilley 503).

“It is clear that adolescent’s ability to handle problems is affected by social and cultural background” (Porteous 467). The way in which an adolescent experiences and copes with stress can be attributed to their relative culture, given that they have grown up under the influence of traditional customs, values and education systems (Persike and Seiffge-Krenke 876). Knowledge of what is socially acceptable and valued in a relative cultural context can contribute to how people raised in this relative culture perceive certain aspects of life (Caduff 469). This can evoke stress in adolescents in regards to their expectations as students, based on how education is valued in their cultures. This encompasses the theory of cultural relativism because relativists deem that “one ought to conform to the mores of his society” and “the mores of a society are necessarily right for that society” (Nowell-Smith 2). This adds pressure for adolescents so that their stress extends beyond doing well because they want to. The expectations of parents and teachers can increase their already existing school-related stress.

This intracultural focus is apparent in the Chinese culture where it is widely known that education is very important and that doing well in school is expected of adolescents. Adolescents want to excel at school to please their parents, as academic achievement is seen as a source of pride for a family in the Chinese culture whereas

failing is shameful (Tan and Yates 391). Parents in the Chinese culture have been found to be very intense (Crystal et al. 748). Students are put under pressure to be competitive academically with peers in order to have a successful career in the future and make great amounts of money (Huan et al. 170). These high expectations make success seem unattainable to students and their perceived inability to succeed generates stress. If success is expected, yet impossible, students will perceive themselves negatively, and as if they are unable to achieve anything.

This stress is seen noticeably more in females than males (Huan et al. 173), possibly because of the history of gender inequality in China. Girls may have more to prove in society (Bauer et al. 334). The school environment itself inflicts school-related stress in Chinese students. Teachers can and will project the traditional Chinese cultural views of education in their teaching (Hui 190). From a relativist perspective, this stress is internalized within Chinese culture- the students derive pressure from relative cultural values. This is not impacted by other cultures and has no effect towards other cultures, as the expectations and performance of one culture are completely unrelated to others.

Adolescents in Northern Europe can also be examined relative to their own culture. Academic concerns and expectations were found to be the most obvious source of stress in high school females in this society (Finch et al. 312). Females in Northern Ireland and Sweden have stated that expectations of their parents, teachers, peers, and themselves are what create the school-related stress in their lives (Finch et al. 315-318; Ollfors and Andersson 144). Most significantly, "Parents may also act as stress amplifiers" (Finch et al. 319). This is because parents can set expectations for their children, which they may not be able to live up to yet feel obligated to do so. However, in



the study: *Competence in Coping with Stress in Adolescents from Three Regions of the World*, it was proven that European adolescent females are able to cope with stress relatively well. This is because in their culture it is valued to use negotiation and expression of emotions with parents and other people who contribute to stress, in order to reduce stress (Persike and Seiffge-Krenke 871). With that being said, parents are the most prominent influence in an adolescent's life, and the intimidating academic expectations of parents can induce more school related stress in high school students lives (Kaplan et al. 5).

There is a competitive nature between Northern European female adolescents, so that when one student outdoes others academically, it causes the others to feel stressed out and as if they are not smart enough or capable enough to do as well (Finch et al. 318). Teachers may also give more assignments, tests and exams without regard for the stress they cause their students (Finch et al. 317). The increasing amount of work can cause stress-related effects on health as well as happiness (Finch et al. 317; Wiklund et al. 2).

The adolescents of Northern Europe were brought up under different belief systems than adolescents in China. However, the theory of cultural relativism involves the knowledge that there are not any universal values; all values are relative, and cross-cultural judgments cannot be made (Nowell-Smith 2). Therefore, even though there are similarities and differences in the perceived stress of adolescent females in the two cultures, they cannot be compared or studied together. This creates an interesting question- if all values, beliefs and cultural elements are internalized within each individual culture, is stress internalized too?

Universalism is the opposite of cultural relativism in theory- they are two opposite extremes (Healy 12). It implies that there is no separation between cultures; all humans are part of this world and therefore cannot be considered or compared relative to a “culture”. All values and morals are universal (Spiro 261).

To look at adolescent stress through universalism theory would be to look at the attributes of the sub-culture that is teenage girls on a global level. In both Northern Europe and China, it was found that school is the most obvious source of stress in high school aged females (Finch et al. 312; Crystal et al. 739). High school females perceive themselves to be under expectations of their parents, teachers and themselves, and thus feel high amounts of school related stress and the pressure to succeed.

“The assertion that people feel strong obligations and pressures as a result of socialization is not an unusual claim” (D’Andrade 97). People everywhere are very influential of each other. In this day and age, education is highly valued universally. Whether it is wealthy adolescents attending prestigious private schools, or adolescents struggling in poorer countries who cannot attend school, people from all walks of life understand the importance of education, and the opportunities it provides. Numerous studies on adolescent females all over the world, of different ethnic groups and races, have shown that there is a relationship between stress in high school aged females and their school performance (Kaplan et al. 4). Teenage girls everywhere, who care about their succeeding academically, are affected by stress. It was also found that the expectations of students and parents relate to student grades. Generally, the higher the academic expectations, the greater the stress experienced (Kaplan et al. 144). Also, a large number of adolescents base their self-worth on their academic success. The

uniformity implied by universalism is apparent in these finding in that education and success are valued universally, and parental expectations of high achieving female students are important to the students.

“In today’s increasingly globalized world, culture does not provide the sole explanation for the relative consistency in goals, values, activities and, interactions that take place within and between cultural environments. Universalism accounts for an increased number of these phenomena. People may no longer view the world as a cluster of independent groupings each with their own parochial needs” (Koslowsky et al. 131). The stress of being a high achieving female in a world driven by success and competition distinguishes these adolescent females as a global sub-culture. They have their own attributes that influence how they live their lives that separate them as a society with values, goals and perceptions that are universal.

### **The Interaction of Psychology and Social and Cultural Anthropology**

“Psychology and culture have a reciprocal relationship of influence” (Vaughn 2). This influence is shown in the affect they have when they are applied together. Psychology and social and cultural anthropology are two entirely different subjects that become intertwined in stimulating the development of academic stress in adolescent females. The concept of psychology involves humans and their behavioural responses and interactions (Woods et al. 5-6), which are impacted by culture whether that impact is relative or universal. The psychological studies on stress encompass variables such as family and friends, as they impact stress susceptibility. Family is a major factor in both

disciplines. Culture has the immediate connotation of family. It shapes what you perceive as important and therefore contributes to psychological impacts of stress and methods of coping. Cultural attributes also create self-expectations in adolescents, which contribute to their lack of self-worth.

From a personal point of view, high school is a difficult time of life. A support system is needed to avoid psychological effects from the stress of being someone who wants to do exceptionally well. Family, friends, teachers or other people who inflict stress can make up the imaginary audience discussed in the psychology section. The connection between this psychological view and social and cultural anthropology is obvious- you derive expectations from everything you take in and everyone you have experienced in a social context, generating pressure and stress. This social context can be relative or universal. Different education systems may lead to different student expectations. Different responses to stressors may reflect differences in typical student psychology of relative cultures. However, the global culture that is high school aged girls has a distinct psychological perspective as well.

Together, society and psychology form the basis of self-perception in adolescent females during a time when they are arguably the most vulnerable to negative views of themselves. This was found to impact their academic achievements and how they approached their futures (Finch et al. 327). The two disciplines therefore create a connection between self-perception and success. Success becomes unattainable yet necessary in order to be happy. Only these girls can determine whether or not they are successful based on what they consider success in regards to their academic aims and capabilities. If what they consider success is unrealistic and impossible to achieve, they

will never meet their own standards and develop a sense of inability. This ultimately affects how they see themselves and success together, both in high school and approaching the future.

This is especially notable if one considers the universal culture of teenage girls and what it takes to be considered significant. There are millions of high school aged females in this world; succeeding to a degree where you stand out and are recognized for it seems impossible.

## **Conclusion**

This essay aimed to answer: What are the impacts of school-related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in China and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success? Evidence revealed that the female high school students most frequently affected by school-related stress are incredibly committed to their educations and want outstanding academic achievement and future success.

The studies used were from the regions of Northern Europe and China, and informed on the alarming causes and consequences of high levels of school-related stress. The subject of psychology exhibited that school-related stress is a concern because it can contribute to or cause mental illnesses and disorders. Social and cultural anthropology presented the similarities in perceived school-related stress between adolescent females in the two regions. Both subjects displayed how stress has a heavy impact on emotions, feelings and mind-sets in adolescent females.

The implications suggest that academic stress in high school students is a concerning topic that needs to be studied further. Mental health is clearly an important area of study, and this has been demonstrated with research and work in many parts of the world. There is however, a gap in the knowledge. Adolescent stress is a subtopic of mental health that has not been explored deeply in many regions, including Nova Scotia. This investigation shows that it needs to be pursued. It is a global issue that is worth further exploration from researchers and experts in the fields of stress, adolescence and mental health.

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## Appendix

The issue of global significance that I chose to study in my extended essay was stress in high school aged females. Choosing a topic was difficult; I wanted it to be something I was interested in so that researching and analyzing would not be boring. My problem was that I did not have one specific thing of interest in my life that was obvious to write about. It took me awhile to come up with my topic. I thought a lot about what my life had been like since I started high school- friends, drama, classes, tests, studying etc. This was how I arrived at my global issue for this essay. I spent a ridiculous amount of time freaking out and getting upset over tests and assignments in grade 10. Academic stress was entirely new to me, and it only got worse as time went on. Eventually, I figured out some ways to deal with it, but it is still there even today.

I really care about school and doing the best I possibly can. Thus, it makes sense that I experience stress regularly. I knew I was not the only one chronically stressed out in my classes at school, and I started to wonder if academic stress was a universal thing. Being in the IB program contributed to this thought. It is a very academically demanding and time-consuming worldwide program. Then I started to consider other factors of stress. People from many different cultural backgrounds attend my high school, and more specifically, in my classes. This lead me to question whether or not culture plays a role in how school is perceived by high school students. I narrowed this question down to adolescent females, as they related more to my life.

At this point in my planning stage, my questions were:

- What is stress and why is it important?

- Are the goals adolescent females set for themselves achievable?
- Why do adolescent females put themselves into situations that will lead to high levels of stress?
- How does school impact identity?
- Does stress lead to isolation/withdrawal?

After some consideration, I decided that I would do a world studies essay using the subjects of psychology and social and cultural anthropology. Then, I looked at the causes and consequences of academic stress. People become stressed out about things they care about. Students become stressed because they want good grades in order to achieve the goals they have set for themselves. Thus, success became one of the main focuses of my extended essay. The effects of stress also fascinated me. Early research showed me that looking past the general psychological effects, the self-perceptions of adolescent females could be affected by stress. This, combined with my previous decisions resulted in the research question: What are the impacts of school related stress on self-perception of high school aged females in Canada and Northern Europe and how is this connected to how they view success?

I then started to research different case studies on adolescent stress, and I encountered my first major limitation: there were no appropriate case studies on stress in female high school students in Canada. I originally wanted to focus on teenage girls in the province I lived in, but this was not possible due to a lack of research in the subject area here. I then found out that there were not enough studies specific enough to my chosen subject area that I could use from Canada. This was very problematic. This forced me to do more research and ultimately changed the research question of my essay. I

changed my focus to Northern Europe and China instead of Canada, as there was sufficient evidence to support the topic of investigation from these regions.

The research process I conducted consisted of reading, pulling quotes from and analyzing case studies, articles, textbooks and novels. This information was put together along with evidence from my own life to complete this essay. Through this process I learned a lot about my chosen topic as well as how to study it. Collecting the necessary information was difficult but when it was all put together it allowed for different ideas to be understood. Also, developing the kind of thought process of a disciplinary thinker and researcher was different for me. Overall, I learned how to use the subjects of psychology and social and cultural anthropology to view and understand adolescent stress in the relative cultures of Northern Europe and China. I learned about cultural similarities and differences in regards to adolescent stress, as well as the general effects of stress compared to the more concentrated effects of academic stress on high school aged females.

The main concern that I developed in writing this essay was the lack of evidence and sources available from Nova Scotia, and Canada in general. Researching this topic proved that it is an issue of global significance and I am concerned about the content of some of the information I found. Stress has disastrous effects and is becoming more widely spread among adolescents. My personal feelings were changed because of this. I think adolescent stress needs to be investigated further by experts, as conducting case studies extends beyond the scope of my essay. With that being said, it needs to be dealt with. The information about how adolescent females are impacted by school-related stress concluding this essay should be able to be applied to other regions of the world.

However, the alarming effects need to be studied to become certain of this. I think local studies should be carried out to find it if this is true and what should be done to fix it.

Several questions remain:

- To what extent do family economic conditions contribute to academic stress in adolescent females?
- Do different adolescent perceptions of the concept of stress ever cause discrepancies in results of case studies?
- Does the lack of local research in this area suggest that this is not a significant enough issue, or that it has not yet been possible to carry out?

I have not changed my mind about stress throughout this process; I have developed my prior understanding to incorporate the factors of self-perception, success, psychology and social and cultural anthropology.